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Commitment before and after: An evaluation and reconceptualization of organizational commitment

Aaron Cohen *

Division of Public Administration, School of Political Science, University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel

Abstract

A review of the organizational commitment literature has pointed out several advantages as well as some limitations of the approach advanced by Meyer and Allen (Meyer, P.J. and Allen, J.N. (1997). *Commitment in the workplace: Theory, research, and application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.). The advantages include good psychometric properties of the current scales, acceptable discriminant validity of the three dimensions, and research findings that showed the usefulness and acceptable content validity of the three-dimensional approach. Some of the limitations are limited predictive validity, conceptual ambiguity of continuance commitment, and concept redundancy between normative and affective commitment. This paper suggests a conceptualization that builds upon the strengths of the current approaches and minimizes their limitations. The proposed theory contends that organizational commitment is two-dimensional. One dimension is instrumental in nature and the second is affective. In addition, a sharp difference needs to be made between commitment propensity that develops before one's entry into the organization and commitment attitudes that develop after one's entry into the organization. The advantages of the suggested theory and its implications for the understanding of organizational commitment and future research on it are discussed.

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1. Introduction and goals

The concept of commitment in the workplace is still one of the most challenging and researched concepts in the fields of management, organizational behavior, and HRM (Cohen, 2003; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Morrow, 1993). A great deal of research has been devoted to studying the antecedents and outcomes of commitment in the work setting. The maturity of the research on commitment has been exemplified by meta-analyses on these concepts (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005) as well as by several books that have provided a more quantitative summary of the knowledge on commitment(s) in the work place (Cohen, 2003; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Morrow, 1993). The conceptual and operational development of organizational commitment (OC) has affected the conceptualization and measurement of other commitment forms such as commitment to the occupation, the job, the workgroup, the union, and the work itself (Cohen, 2003; Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson, & Spiller, 1980; Morrow, 1993).

* Tel.: +972 4 8240041; fax: +972 4 8257785.

E-mail address: ACOHEN@POLI.HAIFA.AC.IL.

For more than 20 years, the leading approach to studying OC has been the three-dimensional (affective, normative, continuance) scales of Meyer and Allen (1984; 1997). This approach was rooted in earlier approaches to OC (Becker, 1960; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974) and was affected by their strengths and weaknesses. Each of the approaches, including the dominant one of Meyer and Allen (1997), contributed to the development of the concept of commitment. However, some of their limitations seem to be the reason for problems in the construct as well as in the predictive validity of organizational commitment dimensions (Cohen, 2003; Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997). This paper will advance a typology that attempts to build upon the strengths of the dominant approaches to OC. The main argument of this paper is that by modifying some of the main postulates of the previous approaches and by revising some of the current conceptualizations, we can create a stronger theory with which to study OC.

The first part of this paper reviews the characteristics of the main approaches to OC. It will argue that while the dominant approach of OC is multi-dimensional (Allen & Meyer, 1990), there is controversy about the contribution of some of its dimensions to the understanding of commitment. Overlap between the two dimensions (e.g. normative and affective commitment) and unclear dimensionality in another dimension (e.g. continuance commitment) are some of the causes for the ambiguity in the current approach to OC. The later part of the paper will argue that some of the thinking and ideas developed so far do provide the basic building blocks for suggesting a conceptualization that will attempt to clarify and to better represent the concept of organizational commitment.

The suggested conceptualization of organizational commitment is presented in Fig. 1. The model suggests two dimensions to commitment — the timing of commitment and the bases of commitment. The timing of commitment distinguishes between commitment propensity, which develops before entry into the organization and organizational commitment, which develops after entry into the organization. The second dimension, the bases of commitment, makes a distinction between commitment based on instrumental considerations and commitment based on psychological attachment. Following the above conceptualization, the suggested theory advances four forms of organizational commitment.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, two of these forms develop before entry into the organization and two develop after. The first two forms that develop before one's entry into the organization are instrumental commitment propensity, which is derived from one's general expectations about the quality of the exchange with the organization in terms of the expected benefits and rewards one might receive from it, and normative commitment propensity, which is a general moral obligation towards the organization. The two forms developed after entry are instrumental commitment, which results from one's perception of the quality of the exchange between one's contributions and the rewards that one's receives, and affective commitment, defined as a psychological attachment to the organization demonstrated by identification with it, emotional involvement and a sense of belonging. As the following sections will demonstrate, these forms are conceptually separate from one another, but they are related because the two pre-entry commitment forms are important determinants of the two post-entry commitments.

The four-component model I propose will advance several modifications to the current conceptualization. First, as a result of the distinction between organizational commitment developed before entry and commitment developed after entry, normative commitment, considered in the current conceptualization of Meyer and Allen (1997) as a situational attitude, is defined as a commitment propensity that reflects individual differences. Second, the distinction between instrumental and affective commitment leads to a shift of focus in the current continuance commitment from considerations about the costs of leaving the organization to perceptions about the benefits of staying. These

Commitment dimensions	Bases of commitment	
	<i>Instrumental attachment</i>	<i>Psychological attachment</i>
<i>Before entry to the organization</i>	Instrumental commitment propensity	Normative commitment propensity
Timing		
<i>After entry to the organization</i>	Instrumental commitment	Affective commitment

Fig. 1. A four component commitment model.

distinctions solve two problems that have plagued commitment researchers. First, the high correlation between affective commitment and normative commitment (Meyer et al., 2002) has caused researchers to question the contribution of normative commitment to the conceptualization of commitment. The conceptualization here argues that the high correlations occur because normative commitment is in fact a propensity to be committed that should be examined before entry into the organization, not after entry. Second, the suggested instrumental commitment here might solve the ambiguities that, for a long time, have been associated with the definition and measurement of the continuance commitment form (Ko et al., 1997). The paper will conclude with a discussion regarding the potential implications of the suggested theory.

1.1. Part 1: the development of the concept of organizational commitment

To better understand the current state of commitment research, a description of the development of the concept and measurement of OC and the way they have affected current conceptualizations of commitment is needed. The concept has developed over a period of three eras, each of which had a strong impact on the current state of OC.

1.2. The early era: commitment as side-bets

This era is based on Howard Becker's (1960) conceptualization that defined commitment by using what is known as the *side-bet* theory. This approach was one of the earliest attempts to advance a comprehensive conceptual framework about the concept of commitment that presents a thorough perspective on the individual's relationship with the organization. According to this theory, committed employees are committed because they have totally hidden or somewhat hidden investments, "side-bets," they have made by remaining in a given organization. The term "side-bets" was used by Becker (1960) to refer to the accumulation of investments valued by the individual that would be lost if he or she were to leave the organization. Becker (1960) argued that over a period of time certain costs accrue that make it more difficult for the person to disengage from a consistent pattern of activity, namely, maintaining membership in the organization. The threat of losing these investments, along with a perceived lack of alternatives to replace or make up for the loss of them, commits the person to the organization.

Becker's approach sees a close connection between the process of commitment and the process of turnover. In fact, it identifies OC as a major factor in the explanation of voluntary turnover. This contention was supported by later research that operationalized Becker's theory (Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973; Ritzer & Trice, 1969). Commitment, according to these studies, should be measured by evaluating the reasons, if any, that would cause a person to leave his organization. Becker's approach and the scales that were assumed to represent it were adopted by later research as the approach to conceptualize and examine commitment to the organization and/or to the occupation. While the side-bet theory was abandoned as a leading commitment theory, the close relationship between commitment and turnover as advanced by Becker affected most of the later conceptualizations of OC and established turnover as the main behavior that should be affected by OC. The influence of the side-bet approach is evident in one of Meyer and Allen's scales, the continuance commitment one. This scale was advanced as a tool for the better testing of the side-bet approach and is one of the three dimensions of OC outlined by Meyer and Allen (1991).

1.3. The middle era: the psychological attachment approach

The main approach of the second era was advanced by Porter et al. (1974). The focus of commitment shifted from tangible side-bets to the psychological attachment one had to the organization. The attitudinal approach advanced by Porter and his colleagues attempted to describe commitment as a focused attitude, uncontaminated by other constructs such as behavioral intentions. Accordingly, commitment was defined by Porter and his supporters as "...the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization..." (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; p. 226). The exchange theory was established as the main explanation for the process of commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). They advanced commitment as an alternative construct to job satisfaction and argued that commitment can sometimes predict turnover better than job satisfaction.

Commitment here was characterized by three related factors: "(1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization..." (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226). While offering a different

view of commitment, Porter and his colleagues still continued with one of the basic assumptions of Becker's theory, namely, the strong ties between commitment and turnover. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) argued in that regard that while the first component focuses on the psychological basis for attachment, the latter two are consequences of commitment rather than antecedents of it.

The tool designed to measure OC based on the approach of Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian is known as the OCQ (Organizational Commitment Questionnaire). It followed the three-dimensional definition outlined above, although in practice, most researchers used this tool as a one-dimensional instrument. In addition to the items that reflect the attitudinal notion of commitment, the OCQ included items that refer to what O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) termed the consequences of commitment. Critics of the OCQ would argue that some of the items of the scale deal with turnover intentions or with performance intentions and that all of the statements are more reflective of behavioral intentions than attitudes (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). On the other hand, supporters of the OCQ would argue that the willingness to perform actions in support of the organization reflects more of a mind set rather than behavioral intentions, and therefore, items such as the ones above reflect the attitudinal approach of the OCQ (Mowday et al., 1982).

However, some of the critiques did convince researchers to be more cautious in the application of the OCQ. The solution found by these researchers was to use a shorter version of the scale, a 9-item version that omitted the six negatively phrased items (Iverson, 1999) or a 12-item version that omitted the three items supposedly dealing with turnover intentions (Beck & Wilson, 2000). Due to the criticism of the scale, whether justifiable or not, the need for an alternative to the OCQ became evident, with the call coming from two sources. One of them was the O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) approach that was specifically advanced as a conceptual and operational alternative to the OCQ. The second one, that of Meyer and Allen (1984), started first as a methodological paper aimed at an improved examination of the side-bet approach using scales more appropriate for this goal. Later on, as will be discussed in the following sections, it was the Meyer and Allen (1984) methodological paper that became the dominant approach to OC.

1.4. The third era: the multi-dimensional approaches

Two leading multi-dimensional approaches were advanced in the 1980s, one by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and the other by Meyer and Allen (1984). There were some other multi-dimensional approaches, but these had much less impact than the two main ones (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) built their approach upon what they portrayed as the problematic state of commitment research, namely the failure to differentiate carefully among the antecedents and consequences of commitment on the one hand, and the basis for attachment on the other. They defined commitment as the psychological attachment felt by the person for the organization, reflecting the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts the characteristics or perspectives of the organization. They argued that one's psychological attachment may be predicted by three independent factors: (a) compliance or instrumental involvement for specific, extrinsic rewards; (b) identification or involvement based on a desire for affiliation; and (c) internalization or involvement predicated on the congruence between individual and organizational values.

Conceptually, O'Reilly and Chatman made a clear distinction between two processes of commitment, the instrumental exchange one and the psychological attachment one. The compliance dimension that represents the exchange process leads to a somewhat shallower attachment to the organization. The deeper attachment, according to O'Reilly and Chatman, results from the psychological attachment formed by the two other dimensions, namely identification and internalization. This distinction will be applied in the theory suggested here. Another interesting contribution of O'Reilly and Chatman was their view of the relationship between OC and outcomes. While previous approaches (Becker, 1960; Porter et al., 1974) emphasized commitment as an important determinant mainly of turnover, O'Reilly and Chatman argued that the psychological attachment could result in other behaviors and pointed to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as a relevant outcome of commitment. This argument will also be included in the conceptualization suggested here.

Studies that have applied the O'Reilly and Chatman scales as is have pointed out some problems with them. Vandenberg, Self, and Sep (1994) concluded that the identification scale contributed nothing beyond the explanations already captured through the OCQ. Others (Bennett & Durkin, 2000) concluded quite correctly that internalization and identification appear to be tapping similar constructs and that the compliance dimension does not really reflect psychological attachment to the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In summary, while O'Reilly and Chatman presented an interesting approach to commitment, for unclear reasons and because of its

questionable operationalization, few researchers have followed this approach. Instead, the approach of Meyer and Allen (1984) became the dominant one to the study of commitment.

Meyer and Allen's (1984) approach started with a paper that argued that the side-bet approach was inappropriately operationalized. The paper argued that the scales developed by Becker's (1960) followers (Alutto et al., 1973; Ritzer & Trice, 1969) do not really measure side-bets but measure attitudinal commitment. The best way to measure side-bets, they contended, is to use measures that more directly assess individuals' perceptions regarding the number and magnitude of the side-bets they have made. In order to test this contention, they compared the interrelationships among several common scales of commitment and two scales they had developed, one representing affective commitment and the other continuance commitment. The affective commitment scale was advanced as a significant improvement over the OCQ. It was well defined as a tool for assessing commitment characterized by positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in, the work organization. Meyer and Allen proposed the continuance dimension as a better representation of Becker's side-bet approach. It was designed to assess the extent to which employees feel committed to their organizations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving. A few years later, a third dimension was added, the normative commitment one (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment was defined as a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain within the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; p. 67). Normative commitment is affected in the main by socialization and/or culture prior to entry into an organization.

More studies have begun to test the scales advanced by Meyer and Allen and to use them as the main instruments for studying commitment. These studies focused on examining the psychometric properties of the scales, particularly their discriminant validity, and their relationship with determinants and outcomes (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Beck & Wilson, 2000; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Jaros, 1997; Ko et al., 1997; McGee & Ford, 1987). The three dimensions were characterized as a "three-component conceptualization of OC" and were described as "...distinguishable components, rather than types, of attitudinal commitment, that is, employees can experience each of these psychological states to varying degrees..." (Allen & Meyer, 1990, pp. 3–4). Later, stronger conceptual justifications were developed regarding this approach with an attempt to relate it to motivation theories (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Criticism has been leveled against the approach of Meyer and Allen. Vandenberg and Self (1993) measured four forms of commitment – the affective and continuance commitment of Meyer and Allen (1984), organizational identification, and OCQ – at three points in time (the first day of work, the third month of work, and the sixth month of work). They found a strong instability in the factor structures, particularly in affective and continuance commitment across the three timeframes. The first explanation they provided for this important finding was that work experiences during the entry period altered the newcomers to such an extent that the items took on a different conceptual meaning from one period to the next. Another explanation was that it might be unrealistic to assume that during the first months of work newcomers develop the depth of understanding about the organization and its constituent components required to relate to the items in a meaningful way. They concluded that respondents in different organizational career stages have difficulties in interpreting the items and assign different meanings to them.

A later criticism and perhaps a stronger one focused on the discriminant and content validity of the scales. Ko et al. (1997) examined the Meyer and Allen scales and argued that there are conceptual problems with the scales and that those problems may be responsible for the psychometric difficulties found in the scales. Ko and his colleagues contended that

Meyer and Allen did not offer a precise definition of commitment that embraces the affective, continuance, and normative components. They simply noted that what is common to the three components is a "psychological state" that links the employee to the organization, but it is not clear what is meant by this psychological state. (Ko et al., 1997, p. 970)

More specifically, Ko et al. focused on two main problems they diagnosed in the approach. The first one was the continuance commitment dimension. They contended that

Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) argued that Becker's (1960) concept of commitment represents a component of attitudinal commitment because he emphasized the awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. However, their argument is untenable. Becker defined commitment as a consistent line of activity (i.e., maintaining membership in the organization) and attempted to explain what causes this inconsistency...Therefore, Becker's

view of commitment seems to be more congruent with the behavioral rather than attitudinal approach of Porter and his colleagues. (Ko et al., 1997, p. 970)

Their second criticism focused on the relationship between affective commitment and normative commitment. Based on their findings that showed a lack of discriminant validity between the two concepts, Ko et al. (1997) concluded that

The concept of NC (e.g. normative commitment) is troublesome because it appears that there is considerable conceptual overlap between NC and AC (e.g. affective commitment). As indicated above, the normative component of commitment is based on the belief that it is the right thing to remain with the organization and that AC is attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization. It is unclear how NC can be conceptually separable from AC. (Ko et al., 1997, p. 971).

They concluded that because of the above mentioned problems considerable conceptual work needed to be done, and new measures should be developed that adequately assess the new conceptualizations. This paper follows the first part of this recommendation.

Meyer and Allen and their colleagues were aware of some of the problems associated with the three-dimensional scales. Throughout the years, some changes in the scales were proposed and tested. For example, a shorter 6-item version of the three scales was advanced, a revised normative commitment scale was also proposed, and a two-dimensional continuance commitment scale was also suggested (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Subsequently, major revisions in the continuance commitment scale were advanced (Powell & Meyer, 2004). While these changes did improve some of the psychometric properties of the scales, they posed a dilemma for researchers as to which version of the scales to use.

2. Summary and conclusions from the literature review

This paper argues that most of the approaches to OC developed so far have the potential to contribute to a better understanding of OC and thus cannot be ignored in any re-conceptualization of commitment. I will suggest a theory that incorporates some modifications to the common commitment approaches in an attempt to build on their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. Several conclusions from the dominant approaches to commitment will guide the suggested theory. First, given the criticism (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) that has been leveled at commitment typologies that have incorporated references to outcomes of commitment in their definitions and scales, a proposed conceptualization of commitment should remain purely attitudinal to avoid such overlap. Adherence to attitudinal issues will prevent possible negative effects on the construct validity of commitment definitions. Second, in terms of the outcomes of commitment, the benefits of commitment should go beyond turnover, as already suggested by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). The strong relationship found between commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Meyer et al., 2002) supports the usefulness of commitment in explaining other valuable outcomes in the workplace.

Third, more attention should be given to the notion of time in the conceptualization of commitment. The instability of the factor structures of commitment across different timeframes (Vandenberg & Self, 1993) suggests that employees have difficulty understanding the meaning of the items typically included in measurements of commitment in different stages in their organizational career. Fourth, the role of normative commitment and continuance commitment should be reexamined in commitment conceptualizations. The high correlations between normative and affective commitment also found in meta-analysis (Meyer et al., 2002), and the bi-dimensionality of continuance commitment suggest the need for modifications of these dimensions (Ko et al., 1997). The suggested theory will apply some of the above conclusions, as well as other ones, in its proposed conceptualization.

3. The suggested theory: a four-component commitment model

3.1. Commitment as an attitude

One of the goals of the four-component commitment model developed here is to minimize the mixture of commitment with the possible behavioral outcomes of commitment. To this end, the general framework of this model

has relied on the theory of reasoned action advanced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Fishbein (1967). This theory uses attitudinal, social influence, and intention variables to predict behavior. The theory asserts that the intention to perform a behavior is determined by the individual's attitude toward performing the behavior and subjective norms held by the individual. Therefore, attitude is the first antecedent of behavioral intention. Subjective norms are determined by an individual's normative beliefs about whether significant others think he/she should or should not perform the behavior, coupled with the motivation to comply with their referents. Behavioral intention refers to the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen's conceptualization will assist in clarifying the differences between commitment as an attitude and behavioral intentions, such as turnover intentions, as outcomes of commitment.

A relevant conceptual distinction between commitment and behavior intentions was advanced by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) who pointed out the difference between attitudinal and behavioral commitment. They argued that attitudinal commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization. In many ways, it can be thought of as a mind set in which individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organization. Behavioral commitment relates to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization and how they deal with this problem. This distinction has affected all current conceptualizations of commitment and, as Ko et al. (1997) have pointed out, has been one of the main reasons for some confusion about the notion and the meaning of commitment. However, an attempt to clarify this confusion will be made by the theory suggested here.

3.2. *Commitment as a two-dimensional concept: time and nature*

The theory advanced here views commitment as composed of two dimensions. The first dimension is the timing of commitment, and it differentiates between pre-entry commitment to the organization and post-entry commitment. The second dimension is the bases of commitment, and it differentiates between instrumental commitment and normative and affective commitments.

3.3. *Time and commitment: pre-entry commitment versus post-entry commitment*

The notion of time is an important factor in the proposed conceptualization. Employees do not begin working in a given organization without some attitude toward commitment. However, those attitudes are general perceptions of commitment that were developed in the socialization process and were influenced by personal values, beliefs, expectations about the job, and prior experiences. Studies have referred to these attitudes as commitment propensity. This concept was advanced by Mowday et al. (1982) and further examined by Pierce and Dunham (1987) and Lee, Ashford, Walsh, and Mowday (1992), who found that it affected commitment to the organization developed after entry. Mowday and his colleagues defined commitment propensity as the aggregation of specific personal characteristics and experiences that individuals bring to organizations, such that a stable attachment to the organization is more likely to develop. Mowday et al. (1982) and Lee et al. (1992) identified a specific temporal sequence to distinguish between commitment propensity and organizational commitment. Commitment propensity, it was theorized, develops prior to organization entry, and higher levels of it are more likely to lead to the development of actual commitment after entry. These researchers contended that whether interest in commitment propensity is theoretical or applied (e.g., influencing subsequent commitment), a major reason for studying it is that actual commitment theoretically cannot exist prior to organizational entry.

Following the above argument, it is suggested here that normative commitment as defined and measured by Allen and Meyer (1990) can be better understood as a pre-entry commitment propensity rather than as post-entry commitment. Normative commitment was defined as the employees' feelings of moral obligation to the organization that push employees to remain in it. Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that this sense of moral obligation developed during one's early socialization in one's culture and family. However, they contended that normative commitment can also be shaped by organizational socialization, in addition to early socialization effects. Unfortunately, there are hardly any research findings to support the relationship between early socialization tactics and normative commitment.

Therefore, it seems that normative commitment is affected very little by specific organizational experiences and does not depend on any exchange process with the organization. Some of the relationship between normative commitment and situational variables can be attributed to the overlap between normative commitment and affective

commitment, as demonstrated by high correlations between them (Meyer et al., 2002). It is not surprising, then, that research findings (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Steijn & Leisink, 2006) have shown a very limited effect of HRM practices on normative commitment, assuming that such practices should have a similar effect to socialization tactics.

Thus, normative commitment should be viewed as a commitment form, an attitude, that is more general in its focus, does not relate to a specific organization, and, as Meyer and Allen (1997) themselves contend, is probably shaped mostly by early socialization and cultural factors. Therefore, measuring normative commitment after entry into the organization provides little information about the commitment of current employees. Normative commitment provides information on individual differences regarding their propensity to become morally committed to the organization.

In order to understand the commitment of current employees, their instrumental or affective commitments should be examined. Instrumental commitment reflects attachment based on a more tangible exchange relationship with the organization. Affective commitment, as defined by Meyer and Allen (1984), provides a good representation of the employee's psychological attachment to the specific organization. Both commitments are influenced mainly by one's organizational experiences and therefore should be evaluated after one's entry into the organization. The findings of Vandenberg and Self (1993) that showed strong instability in the factor structures of affective and continuance commitment across three timeframes also support the need to distinguish between commitment propensity and commitment after entry into the organization.

Proposition 1. *Timing is a key element in commitment, creating two dimensions: pre-entry commitment propensity versus post-entry commitment. Commitment propensity deals with the general propensity to be committed to the organization, while post-entry commitment deals with actual commitment to the specific organization.*

3.4. The nature of commitment: instrumental versus affective

The theory advanced here suggests that the nature of commitment is also two-dimensional, both as pre-entry and post-entry commitments. One dimension, the instrumental one, is strongly tied to and is part of the motivational process. The second dimension views commitment as a normative or affective process resulting from one's early socialization or work experiences. The first dimension regards commitment as an instrumental exchange. It is different in its focus than the continuance commitment dimension of Meyer and Allen (1984) that focuses on the employee's perceptions of the costs of leaving the organization. The instrumental type of commitment advanced here concentrates on the exchange between the individual and the organization from the individual's point of view (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Instead of focusing on the costs of leaving the organization, it focuses on the perceived benefits of staying in the organization. This shift in emphasis avoids any potential overlap with outcomes such as turnover intentions. Moreover, the concept of continuance commitment, which focused on the cost of leaving, has experienced some problems with its construct and predictive validity. The theory here attempts to bypass past difficulties in the conceptualization of commitment by shifting the emphasis from the cost of leaving (continuance commitment) to the benefits of staying (instrumental commitment).

The second dimension is a normative or affective one. Normative commitment can be described as the belief by an individual that one has a moral obligation to engage in a mode of conduct reflecting loyalty and duty in all social situations in which one has a significant personal involvement. Such a person tends to believe that it is "right" to be loyal, for example, to one's family, country, friends, and quite likely to one's work organization as well (Wiener, 1982, p. 423). The affective commitment parallels the notion of psychological attachment advanced by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). Accordingly,

Attachment to an individual, object, or organization results from identification with the attitudes, values, or goals of the model: that is, some of the attributes, motives, or characteristics of the model are accepted by the individual and become incorporated into the cognitive response set of the individual. (Kagan, 1958)

Both commitments are based on psychological attachment to the organization but they differ in their timing and their determinants, as will be discussed later. This distinction was refined by Argyle (1989), who proposed that commitment can be thought of in two ways: calculative and affective commitment. Calculative commitment corresponds to Etzioni's (1961) notion of utilitarian exchange, signaling an instrumental attachment to an organization, while affective commitment corresponds to Etzioni's notion of moral involvement, signaling a non-instrumental, emotional attachment to the organization through internalizing its values. Argyle argued that this conceptualization of commitment echoes the idea of transactional (i.e., calculative) and relational (i.e., affective) contractual orientation.

While the instrumental form of commitment can be described as a lower level order of commitment, the normative and particularly the affective ones may be characterized as higher level orders of commitment. The term higher versus lower level order of commitment is parallel to similar distinctions made in management theory and industrial psychology where similar distinctions have been made for other constructs. Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) motivation theory is one example where such terminology is used. The difference between the hygiene (extrinsic) factors, representing the lower order needs of individuals, and the motivation factors (intrinsic), representing the higher order needs of individuals, is similar to the distinction between the commitments outlined here. Another example is rooted in the difference between transactional leadership and transformational leadership (Bass, 1998). Transactional leadership involves contingent reinforcement. In this management style, leaders either make assignments or consult with followers about what is to be done in exchange for implicit or explicit rewards and the desired allocation of resources. Transformational leadership contains four components: charisma or idealized influence (attributed or behavioral), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. It deals with the higher order needs of employees.

An additional distinction that parallels the one advanced here comes from the psychological contract literature (Hu, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau, 1995, 2000). Two of the most widespread forms of contracts in the employment relationship are transactional and relational contracts. The transactional contract, like the transactional leadership style mentioned above, refers to the short-term exchange of specific benefits and contributions that are monetary or economic in nature. In contrast, the relational contract refers to a long-term exchange involving a mutually satisfying relationship with open-ended arrangements that include socio-emotional as well as economic terms. It is important to note that the psychological contract conceptualization was empirically supported for another form of commitment, that of commitment to the union (Sverke & Kuruvilla, 1995).

The distinction between these two types of commitment is not entirely new in the commitment literature. Marsh and Mannari (1977) distinguished between two forms of commitment. One is based on what they termed status enhancement factors such as pay, advancement, job achievement, and job satisfaction. While they proposed the notion of exchange as the main process at work here, they also noted, in keeping with Abegglen (1958), the existence of a deeper level of commitment. Accordingly, a system of shared obligations takes the place of the economic basis of the employment of workers by the organization. In this view, the worker considers it morally right to remain with the company, regardless of how much status enhancement or satisfaction the firm gives him over the years. Marsh and Mannari termed this set of factors “lifetime commitment norms and values.” They made a strong cultural differentiation in their conceptualization by suggesting that the status enhancement commitment is common in American culture, while the lifetime commitment is more common in Japanese society.

Sverke and Kuruvilla (1995) used such a two-dimensional approach to define and measure union commitment. They distinguished between instrumental rationality based commitment and value rationality based commitment. Instrumental commitment reflects a utilitarian relationship between members and unions, where the individual member is attached to the union mainly because of the union’s instrumental value to the member. The degree of this commitment is dependent upon conscious assessments of costs and benefits associated with membership. On the other hand, a member is value rationality committed if the goals of the union are consistent with her or his values. In contrast to the instrumental dimension, value based commitment is not likely to vary with the short-term gains made by the union, but is more long-term and stable. This conceptualization can easily be applied to the organizational context.

In short, these two dimensions, time (pre- and post-entry commitment) and basis (instrumental versus affective and normative) of commitment, provide the basic framework for the theory outlined here.

Proposition 2. *The basis of commitment separates commitment into two dimensions: instrumental commitment, which is based on instrumental exchange, and normative and affective commitment, which are based on psychological attachment and the internalization of the goals and values of the organization.*

4. Forms of commitment

4.1. Commitment propensity: normative and instrumental propensities

As Fig. 1 shows before one enters a specific organization, one already has two commitment propensities that have developed in the socialization within one’s culture. These propensities are two-dimensional—normative and instrumental. Following Wiener’s (1982) rationale, normative commitment propensity can be characterized as the

belief that one has a moral obligation to demonstrate loyalty and duty in all social situations in which one has a significant personal involvement. A committed individual retains membership in the organization not because he or she has determined that doing so is to his or her personal benefit, but because s/he believes that s/he “should” behave this way, because it is “right” and expected (Wiener & Vardi, 1980). According to Wiener and Vardi (1980), normative commitment is independent of direct, “selfish” interests and of immediate and temporary situational concerns.

This paper will also follow Meyer and Allen’s (1991) basic rationale but with some minor modifications. First, their concept of normative commitment will be regarded here as normative propensity, defined as a general feeling of moral obligation toward the organization and employment in the organization. Normative propensity is relevant before one’s entry into the organization. As suggested by Angle and Lawson (1993), it represents commitment propensity, an inclination to become committed, and as such is best described as a personal value that acts as an antecedent to commitment (Brown, 1996). As mentioned earlier, normative commitment propensity is a stable attitude and is rooted in one’s past experiences, particularly culture and socialization. It can be affected very little by specific organizational experiences or experiences with any other relevant foci of commitment. Thus, one difference between this conceptualization and Meyer and Allen’s (1991) one is the timeframe.

Proposition 3. *Normative commitment propensity is a general moral obligation towards the organization that reflects the likelihood of becoming committed to it.*

This paper argues that in addition to the normative propensity described above, an instrumental commitment propensity also affects one’s commitment. Wiener and Vardi (1980) termed this process a motivational one based on instrumental processes. According to them, in business organizations, the primary mechanism is “motivation,” because the essence of members’ involvement and “contract” with the organization is economic and incentive oriented. They continued that in some organizational settings a calculative, incentive oriented “contract” is strongly emphasized. In such settings, rewards, particularly monetary ones, serve as basic control mechanisms (Wiener & Vardi, 1980).

Wiener (1982) argued that instrumental beliefs and motivation are determined earlier by one’s primary socialization and culture. In some cultures, the socialization process places less emphasis on moral obligations and more on instrumental considerations. Marsh and Mannari’s (1977) description of commitment based on status enhancement that is deeply rooted in some cultures is a good illustration of instrumental commitment propensity. This commitment form is different in its focus than the continuance commitment advanced by Becker (1960) or by Meyer and Allen (1984). Instrumental commitment propensity is defined here as a general tendency to be committed to a given organization based on one’s expectations of benefits, compensations, and remunerations from the specific organization. This propensity is based on the expected exchanges with the organization. An expectation that such an exchange will be beneficial to the individual will lead to a high level of instrumental propensity.

Proposition 4. *Instrumental commitment propensity is derived from one's general expectations about the quality of the exchange with the organization. This exchange is based on the expected benefits and rewards one might receive from the organization.*

4.2. Instrumental and affective commitment

When one begins employment in a given organization, two commitment forms start to develop—instrumental commitment and affective commitment. The logic of these commitments is similar to that of the instrumental and normative propensities, but they are based on a different set of experiences, namely situational and organizational ones. Instrumental commitment develops from the actual exchange with the specific organization. Accordingly, an individual evaluates his or her commitment to the organization based on his or her perceptions of the quality of the exchange with the organization.

The notion of instrumental commitment has its roots in early commitment literature. Etzioni (1961) made a distinction between moral involvement and calculative involvement. The first represents a positive and intense orientation toward the organization that is based on the internalization of the organization’s goals, values, and norms and on identification with authority. Calculative involvement represents a less intense relationship with the organization and is largely based on the exchange relationship with the organization that develops between members and the organization. Accordingly, members become committed to the organization because they see a beneficial or equitable exchange between their contributions to the organization and the rewards they receive. Instrumental commitment is based on a tangible exchange

relationship with the organization and can be defined as attachment resulting from one's perception of the quality of the exchange between his or her contributions to the organization and the rewards that he or she receives.

Proposition 5. *Instrumental commitment is an attachment resulting from one's perception of the quality of the tangible exchange between his or her contributions to the organization and the rewards that he or she receives.*

In the early stages of one's membership in the organization, the dominant commitment is the instrumental one. More time and more information are needed for one to develop a deeper level of commitment, the affective one. Attachment theory can provide one explanation for the time needed to develop affective commitment. It may be that interpersonal attachment within a small group adds to the total sense of attachment felt for the large subgroup or organization (Yoon, Baker, & Ko, 1994). This process, however, needs time to evolve so that the person develops a deeper affective commitment than is possible through just calculative means. This commitment will be characterized by feelings of identification, belonging, and emotional involvement that typify affective commitment.

Beck and Wilson (2000, 2001) argued that affective OC develops in response to certain experiences in the organization. Each individual develops a unique relationship with the organization based on unspoken expectations about the work experience. These expectations constitute a psychological contract that reflects unarticulated hopes and feelings about what the organization and employees will give and get from the employment relationship. The psychological contract is defined as an individual's belief in paid-for promises, or a reciprocal obligation between the individual and the organization (Rousseau, 1995). The expectations constitute a contract because both parties consider their expectations to be part of the bargain struck when they mutually agreed to form a relationship (Romzek, 1990). A breach of the psychological contract on the part of the organization might lead employees to question their commitment.

Rousseau (1998) discussed the notion of a deeper level of commitment by differentiating between situated identification and higher-level identification. Situated identification was defined as a perception of a discrete work setting, created by situational cues signaling shared interests and maintained as long as the cues persist. She argued that at a deeper level, identification occurs when the employment relationship alters the mental mode individuals have of themselves to incorporate the organization itself. Rousseau defined deep structure identification as the cognitive scheme formed in work settings across roles, over time, and across situations that leads to congruence between the self at work and one's broader self-concept. She argued that situated identification is a necessary but not sufficient condition for deep structure identification.

In short, affective commitment develops more slowly and generally later than the instrumental one. The definition advanced here defines commitment using a strong, attitudinal approach that emphasizes the deep psychological attachment of the highly committed individuals.

Proposition 6. *Affective commitment is a psychological attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is emotionally involved in, and feels a strong sense of belonging to the organization.*

5. Proposed model of the development of organizational commitment

The suggested conceptualization of the development of organizational commitment is presented in Fig. 2. Few studies have advanced a model of the development of commitment that covers both pre-entry and post-entry commitment. Mowday et al.'s (1982; Chapter 3) model is one of the few such models, and its basic arguments will be applied here. They argued that commitment to organizations is best characterized as a process that unfolds over time. The process begins before the employee enters the organization and extends over successive years of employment. Their model considers the changes in commitment before and after employment in the organization and thus provides a good starting point for the model advanced here. One major difference between their model and the model here is that Mowday et al. treated commitment as uni-dimensional while the model here emphasizes the distinction between instrumental commitment and the normative and affective ones.

5.1. Pre-entry process of commitment

The first part of the proposed model describes the pre-entry process of commitment. As Fig. 2 shows, three groups of variables affect commitment propensities. The first group is personal characteristics such as values, beliefs, and personality. Pierce and Dunham (1987) argued that the collective works of organizational scholars suggest that pre-

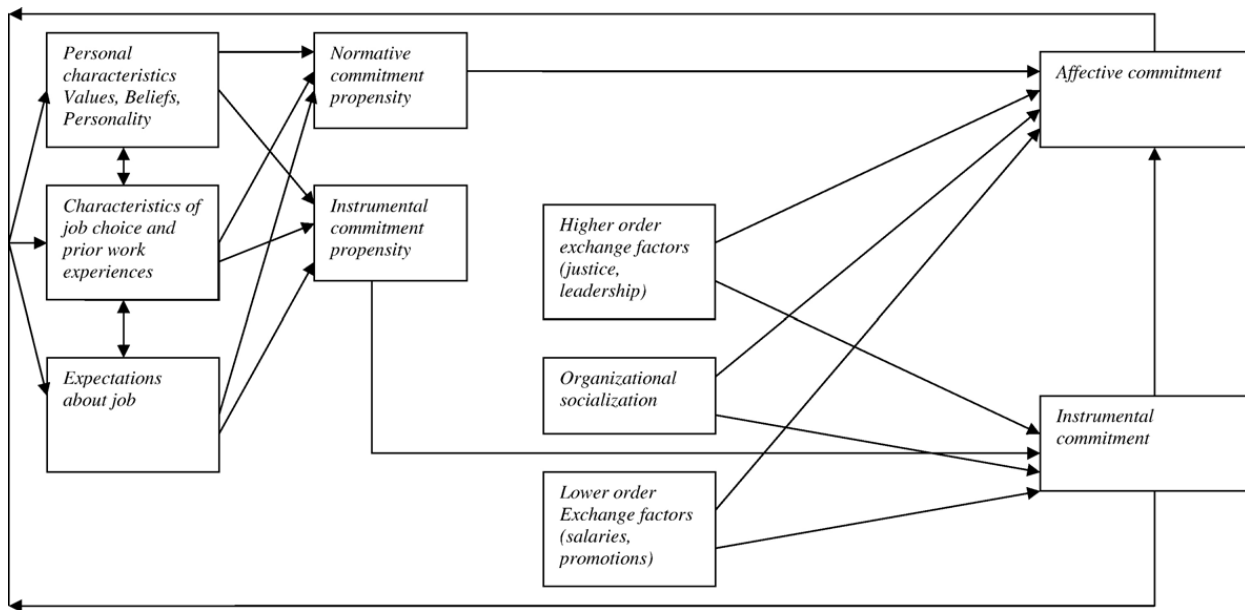


Fig. 2. Proposed model of the development of organizational commitment.

employment attitudes may play a meaningful role in the development of commitment. New employees entering organizations have different goals and values that they seek to satisfy through employment. The more congruence employees perceive between their values and beliefs and those of the organization, the stronger their propensity to commit to the organization. The socialization of individuals in their specific culture, both in the family and through educational experiences, and the resulting values and beliefs appear to represent important influences on the propensity of employees to become committed to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Since new employees may enter organizations with strongly held beliefs and values that are difficult to change, non-organizational sources of socialization represent important influences on commitment. Cohen's (2006) finding of a strong relationship between personal cultural values and organizational commitment, as well as other commitment forms, strongly supports the above contention.

Expectations about one's job are another category of variables that affect commitment propensity. Employees who enter organizations with high expectations may have a greater propensity to become committed, although continued commitment during the early employment period may be more sensitive to actual job experiences than to initial expectations or any comparison between the two (Mowday et al., 1982). The third group of variables deals with circumstances associated with the new hire's decision to join the organization. This factor also has important implications for her or his propensity to become committed. For example, low extrinsic justifications for taking the job and major sacrifices in job choice, such as not accepting other attractive job offers from other organizations, are associated with a higher propensity to become committed. Prior work experiences can also shape one's commitment propensity (Lee et al., 1992). An individual who has had positive work experiences in previous organizations will probably have a greater propensity to become committed to the new organization.

Which of the variables described above is most closely related to which of the commitment propensities? It seems that personal characteristics, particularly cultural values and beliefs that were formed in one's early socialization, will be more strongly related to normative propensity than to instrumental propensity. In cultures where traditional values dominate, a stronger relationship between these values and normative propensities is expected. Characteristics of job choice and expectations about the job will be related more strongly to instrumental propensity because most of these considerations are affected by instrumental considerations such as expected income, expected working conditions, and the like.

Proposition 7. *Normative commitment propensity will be strongly affected by personal characteristics such as personal values and beliefs.*

Proposition 8. *Instrumental commitment propensity will be strongly affected by the characteristics of job choice and expectations about the job.*

5.2. The development of subsequent organizational commitment

The second part of the model describes the post-entry process of commitment that results in higher or lower levels of instrumental and affective commitment. Mowday et al. (1982) and Lee et al. (1992) emphasized the role of commitment propensity in affecting subsequent commitment. They argued that commitment propensity develops prior to organization entry, its primary effects occur during organization entry, and actual organizational commitment results as its main, though not sole, outcome. Thus, the second part of the model in Fig. 2 suggests a relationship between the two commitment propensities and the two actual commitments, those developed after entry, namely affective and instrumental commitment. Naturally, because of the similarity in the conceptual frames of reference discussed above, instrumental commitment propensity is expected to affect instrumental commitment and normative commitment propensity is expected to affect affective commitment.

Proposition 9. *An employee with a high level of normative commitment propensity is more likely to develop a high level of affective commitment. An employee with a high level of instrumental commitment propensity is more likely to develop a high level of instrumental commitment.*

Mowday et al. (1982) correctly argued that commitment propensities are not the only variables that affect subsequent commitment. Theory and research have both strongly emphasized the role of work and organizational experiences in affecting the development of subsequent commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002; Mowday et al., 1982), using the exchange theory as the leading explanation for the effect of experiences. These arguments are adopted in general by the model suggested here. However, the dichotomization of commitment here into instrumental and affective forms leads to a different categorization of the variables that affect the development of subsequent commitments.

It is argued here that variables that represent perceptions of lower order exchange (see Fig. 2) are expected to be related to instrumental commitment. Such variables include perceptions of rewards, perceptions of the way in which the instrumental exchange expectations were met by the organization, perceptions of promotion, etc. In a longitudinal design study, Whitener and Walz (1993), who examined the exchange variables of affective and continuance commitment, concluded that it is important to move beyond the perception of the *availability* of alternatives to the *attractiveness* of alternatives in assessing the competitiveness of rewards and costs. The determinants of instrumental commitment can be viewed based on the inducements-contributions perspective (March and Simon, 1958) advanced by Mowday et al. (1982). Accordingly, whether strong contributions lead to high levels of (instrumental) commitment depends on the level of inducements provided for employees.

The rationale for two different mechanisms that create different dimensions of attachments is common in the leadership literature. Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson (2003) argued, for example, that transactional leadership can build a base level of trust in the leader, as he/she clarifies expectations and rewards and reliably executes what has been agreed upon (e.g., instrumental commitment). Transformational leadership may then build on these initial levels of trust by establishing a deeper sense of identification among followers with respect to the organization's values and vision. Epitropaki and Martin (2005) found that transformational leaders do indeed appear to evoke a much deeper identification with the organization by satisfying employees' self-enhancement needs.

Proposition 10. *Instrumental commitment will be influenced by one's experiences in the organization regarding the quality of exchange with the organization and the way in which one's earlier expectations regarding this exchange were met, and to a lesser extent by organizational socialization.*

The development of affective commitment will also be affected by variables that represent considerations other than just purely tangible instrumental ones. Wiener (1982) suggested that what can affect one's later commitment is individual-organization value congruency. The better the perceived fit between the two values, the higher the level of commitment. An interesting conceptualization for explaining the rationale of the variables that will impact affective commitment was advanced by Salancik (1977), who argued that the key determinants of commitment are the characteristics of the job and the work environment that increase the employee's felt responsibility. Ganzach, Pazy, Ohayon and Brainin (2002), who examined the effect of exchange-inducing treatments on pre- and post-entry commitment of military recruits, found that the level of post-entry commitment of those who were trained for better decision-making processes was higher than the commitment level among the control groups. The argument here is that non-instrumental rewards increase the felt responsibility of the employee more strongly than instrumental ones.

Variables that can represent non-instrumental considerations are perceptions of justice, perceptions of organizational support, and transformational leadership. All of the above variables relate to experiences that do not focus merely on instrumental exchanges. As for justice and organizational support, according to theory, perceived organizational support is enhanced by positive and discretionary treatment by the organization that leads employees to believe that the organization is committed to them. Procedural justice can be seen as one aspect of such treatment that is indicative of the degree of organizational support. The same goes for distributive justice when it is operationalized more broadly to include work outcomes other than just pay. In this case, employees should feel more strongly that outcome fairness is related to the organization's discretion. Under the norm of reciprocity, employees with strong perceptions of organizational support would feel obligated to repay the organization in terms of organizational commitment (Loi, Hang-Yue, & Foley, 2006).

Proposition 11. *Affective commitment will be influenced by variables such as transformational leadership, perceptions of justice, and organizational support that represent higher order exchanges.*

Organizational socialization can also affect one's instrumental and affective commitment. Socialization focuses on how individuals learn the beliefs, values, orientations, behaviors, and skills necessary to fulfill their new roles and function effectively within an organization's milieu (Van Maanen, 1976). Socialization tactics can influence the role orientations that newcomers ultimately adopt (Fullagar, Gordon, Gallagher, & Clark, 1995; Van Maanene & Schein, 1979). The role of socialization tactics in affecting commitment levels is an under-researched area, and more study is needed before making any firm conclusions about the relationship between the two. However, the suggested two-dimensional conceptualization of commitment might clarify the role of socialization in affecting commitment by specifying the different content that socialization brings to each of the commitment dimensions. First, the contribution of the socialization process to commitment may be in providing the individual with information on the procedures (paths) and valences of exchange that will facilitate the instrumental exchange between employees and the organization. This information will increase instrumental commitment. Socialization tactics can also influence affective commitment by providing information about the goals and values of the organization and by attempting to increase the fit between the organization goals and values and the individual ones. This might increase the level of affective commitment that is based in large part on identifying with the organization's goals and values. For example, Ashforth and Saks (1996) found strong and positive effects of socialization tactics on organizational identification.

Proposition 12. *Instrumental commitment and affective commitment will be positively influenced by organizational socialization tactics.*

The model in Fig. 2 suggests two other relationships that should be mentioned. First, the model shows a path from instrumental commitment to affective commitment. This path supports the arguments made above about the superiority of affective commitment as the highest level of organizational commitment. This relationship is supported, for example, by Salancik (1977) who argued that behavioral commitment, a somewhat similar idea to instrumental commitment here, impacts affective commitment by binding the individual to a course of behavior, demonstrated in behavioral commitment. The idea here is that the individual's perception of the quality of the instrumental exchange will affect his or her affective commitment. Second, the model shows a loop from both instrumental commitment and affective commitment to the determinants of commitment propensities. This loop suggests that one's experiences in the organization, including commitment attitudes, become an ingredient in one's commitment propensities. For example, when one terminates employment in a given organization, it is the normative and instrumental commitment propensities that remain with the individual. These commitments are based also on the experiences collected by the individual during his or her work experience in one or more organizations.

Proposition 13. *Instrumental commitment will be positively influenced by affective commitment.*

Proposition 14. *Affective and instrumental commitment will become an ingredient in the antecedents of commitment propensities and will affect these propensities.*

6. Implications of the model for theory and practice

In this paper I suggest a theory to organizational commitment that builds upon previous approaches. The proposed theory has several potential advantages. First, it takes a purely attitudinal approach in order to avoid an overlap with

outcomes and behavioral intentions that characterize other concepts. Second, the theory acknowledges the fact, supported by research (Vandenberg & Self, 1993), that commitment has different meanings in different time periods in one's organizational career. As a result, a distinction is made between commitment propensity developed before entry into the organization and organizational commitment developed after entry. Third, the theory emphasizes the motivational force or the bases behind commitment. One of the two dimensions of commitment, the instrumental one, is part of an ongoing exchange process. Fourth, the theory here emphasizes affective commitment as the highest and deepest form of commitment.

This proposed framework suggests several modifications to the current conceptualizations of organizational commitment, in particular the distinction between commitment propensities and post-entry commitment. As a result, normative commitment, considered in the current conceptualization as a situational attitude, is defined as commitment propensity. Second, the suggested theory defines commitment as two-dimensional in nature, attitudinal and instrumental. As a result, the current concept of continuance commitment focuses on perceptions of the benefits of staying in the organization, not on the cost of leaving it. These two changes might solve two problems that commitment research struggles with at present. First, the high correlation between affective commitment and normative commitment (Meyer et al., 2002) has caused researchers to question the contribution of normative commitment to the conceptualization of commitment. The conceptualization here argues that the high correlations result from the fact that normative commitment is actually a propensity to be committed rather than a situation-specific organizational commitment form. As such normative commitment propensity, that represents individual differences, is one of the important antecedents of affective commitment. The suggested instrumental commitment here might solve the problems that have long been associated with the continuance commitment form (Ko et al., 1997). The problems in the dimensionality of continuance commitment, as well as its weak relationships with determinants and outcomes, might be resolved by defining it as instrumental commitment that better represents the notion of exchange.

The above conceptual framework can also be generalized to other forms of commitment in the workplace. The same mechanisms described above might be applicable and relevant to other commitment foci, such as the occupation. A person can have an instrumental commitment propensity to a given occupation before working in this occupation. This propensity is based on the expected exchange that would result from becoming a member of this occupation. The same person may also have a certain level of normative commitment propensity to this occupation. This normative propensity is rooted in the early socialization process that creates general values towards this occupation. Some students may decide to study medicine because one of their parents was a physician and the person developed a strong normative commitment propensity to this profession during his or her socialization process. Another may have a strong normative propensity because s/he sees the occupation as a focus for self-actualization, the fulfillment of oneself.

When one enters an occupation, instrumental and normative propensities become less important, and the post-entry instrumental and the affective ones start to develop. Instrumental occupational commitment will be based on the actual exchange with the occupation, including the exchange of rewards, reputation, and status in return for commitment. Later, a person may develop a deeper commitment to the occupation that will be based on feelings of psychological attachment, pride in being a member of a given occupation, and a strong feeling of belonging. This attachment constitutes the affective commitment to the occupation. Other commitment forms, such as commitment to the job, the workgroup, or the union, may be typologized in a similar manner. In such conceptualizations, one should consider that the time for measuring the affective and instrumental dimensions might differ. The starting point for accumulating experiences might differ for OC than for occupational commitment (Beck & Wilson, 2001). The proposed theory should create more consistency in research on multiple commitments in the workplace. Currently, research in this area uses different definitions and measures for different forms of commitment, making it difficult to compare them or to examine them together in the same design. Using similar conceptualizations and measures will allow for a better generalization of findings on other forms of commitment in the workplace. It should be noted that a somewhat similar conceptualization to the one here was successfully applied to union commitment (Sverke & Kuruvilla, 1995).

The suggested theory might also assist in clarifying the relationship between commitment and culture. Findings on this relationship have been unclear and have not enhanced our understanding about it. One of the important demonstrations of this point was the research that compared Japanese employees with American ones (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985; Luthans, McCaul, & Dodd, 1985; Marsh & Mannari, 1977; Near, 1989). The findings showed minor differences between the two, while the expectation was for much sharper differences. It might be that the prevalent mistake in research that has performed cross-cultural comparisons is comparing commitment forms that are less relevant to the compared groups. This mistake probably accounted for the minor differences in affective commitment

among cultures that were expected to differ significantly. Comparing Japanese and American employees using the OCQ or an instrument that measures affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984) may result in a faulty representation of the two cultures because both scales are strongly affected by situational determinants rather than cultural ones.

Using the conceptual framework outlined here might yield a different conclusion. The theory suggested here would have been to compare normative and instrumental commitment propensities that are more culturally affected and are more relevant for cross-cultural comparisons. These forms, as explained above, are rooted in one's socialization and culture and are more relevant to a cross-cultural comparison than the post-entry affective and the instrumental forms. The last two are affected more by specific situational and organizational factors that can have similar effects across cultures. Cultural differences will be more evident in commitment propensities that are rooted in the socialization process that characterize each culture, namely the instrumental and the normative propensities. Sverke and Kuruvilla (1995), who applied a similar conceptualization to this one to union commitment, also concluded that such conceptualization provides a more stable basis for comparisons across different national and international settings.

One strongly suspects that Japanese and American cultures differ with regard to normative commitment propensity. The normative propensity of the Japanese is deeply rooted in their society and manifests itself in their high collectivist values, long-term orientation, as well as in their strongly masculine culture (Hofstede, 1980). As a traditional society, they value commitment greatly. In contrast, American culture places a high value on the individual's need for satisfaction. Marsh and Mannari (1972) noted these differences, and their findings support the argument that American culture emphasizes instrumental commitment while Japanese culture emphasizes normative commitment. Following the above logic, we would expect that members of traditional societies like the Arabs and the Chinese would demonstrate higher levels of normative propensity, while members of Western societies would demonstrate higher levels of instrumental propensity.

This, of course, does not preclude the possibility of individual differences. Even in a culture where instrumental commitment propensity dominates, there will be individual differences among employees who will demonstrate high and low levels of both propensities. However, regardless of individual variations, the differences in the magnitude of these commitment propensities across cultures will probably be strong enough so that the average magnitude of propensity levels may help us characterize cultural differences. The differences may be strong enough to suggest that normative and instrumental propensities as conceptualized here may provide another dimension for describing cultural differences.

Future research using the suggested theory should develop appropriate scales for measuring it. Two of the existing scales might provide good measures for two of the commitment constructs mentioned here. The normative commitment scale of Meyer and Allen (1997) can be applied to measure the normative commitment propensity. The affective commitment scale of Meyer and Allen is a good representation of the affective commitment construct presented here. The original 8-item scale of normative commitment actually assesses the notion of normative commitment advanced here much more so than does the revised 6-item scale advanced by Meyer and Allen (1997) because the latter is very organization-specific. In contrast, the original 8-item version contains statements that are more relevant to the general moral obligation advanced here as better representing normative commitment propensity. Therefore, the original scale minus items 4 and 5 (see Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 119) that refer to turnover intentions from the current organization would be a good starting scale for normative commitment.

As for the affective commitment scale, most of the items included in the Meyer and Allen (1997) scale fit with the notion of affective commitment as described here, except for one of the items: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization." There are two problems with the phrasing of this item. First, it includes a reference to the notion of turnover, although very indirectly, which is a consequence of commitment. Second, and more importantly, using the term "career" is not advisable because it might cause concept redundancy with the conceptualization and measurement of career commitment. Therefore, it is suggested that this item be replaced with another one or that researchers use the Meyer and Allen scale without this item. Much more development work is needed in the case of instrumental propensity and instrumental commitment, where scales for measuring these factors must be created almost from scratch. The resulting instruments should be based on the rationale for these constructs presented earlier.

6.1. Practical implications

The suggested theory has practical organizational and HR implications. First, organizations should consider the difference between commitment propensity and post-entry commitment. Organizations can use measures of

commitment propensity to evaluate the likelihood of a candidate's developing strong levels of commitments after entry into the organization. Those with higher levels of propensity commitment would need fewer organizational socialization and training programs targeted at increasing commitment than those with lower levels of commitment propensities. In that regard, the difference between normative commitment propensity and instrumental propensity is also important in terms of practical implications. Employees with a higher normative propensity in comparison to the instrumental one would need less socialization and training that emphasizes the benefits of membership in the organization.

After entry, organizations should be aware of the importance of instrumental commitment for developing higher levels of affective commitment. While instrumental commitment demonstrates a somewhat shallow level of commitment, namely commitment that is based on tangible extrinsic exchange, it is important for developing and maintaining higher levels of affective commitment, particularly in the early stages of employment (Mowday et al., 1982). The organization should not necessarily concentrate on ways to avoid turnover intentions by their employees but on strategies for developing a fair and supportive work environment in terms of the promotion and reward system in the organization. This approach does not preclude the importance of satisfying the higher order needs of employees, particularly at later stages of employment. These needs are an important key for creating and maintaining a higher and deeper level of commitment of employees to their organization. Organizations that focus mainly on instrumental exchange should be aware of the fact that their employees will develop a shallow level of commitment, not based on deep psychological attachment, and might be more vulnerable for voluntary turnover when exploring job offers with higher and better rewards. The higher order needs are the key for heightening levels of employee commitment so that better rewards in other organizations will not always be enough for current employees to consider leaving their organization.

Two other practical implications are worth noting. First, organizational commitment as conceptualized here can affect a variety of work behaviors and outcomes, such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and in-role performance. Increasing and maintaining organizational commitment at a higher level can positively affect employees' work behavior, not just dampen their turnover intentions. Second, more attention should be paid to socialization tactics as a tool for creating and maintaining higher levels of commitment. Socialization tactics should emphasize the fairness and the quality of the instrumental rewards systems in the organization as well as the importance that the organization assigns to satisfying the higher order needs of employees. This approach will create a good starting point for developing a strong, stable and deep level of commitment of employees from the start of the employment relationship.

In short, the theory advanced here does not ignore the contribution of current conceptualizations of commitment. It builds upon them in an attempt to use previous work as building blocks for a conceptualization that will better represent the concept of commitment in the workplace. It also has a stronger potential for generalizing the findings based upon it across nations and cultures. Naturally, future research is needed to validate the proposed theory. This research should begin with the development of scales that will assess the conceptual arguments outlined here. Empirical research should be performed in order to demonstrate the utility of the suggested conceptualization.

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